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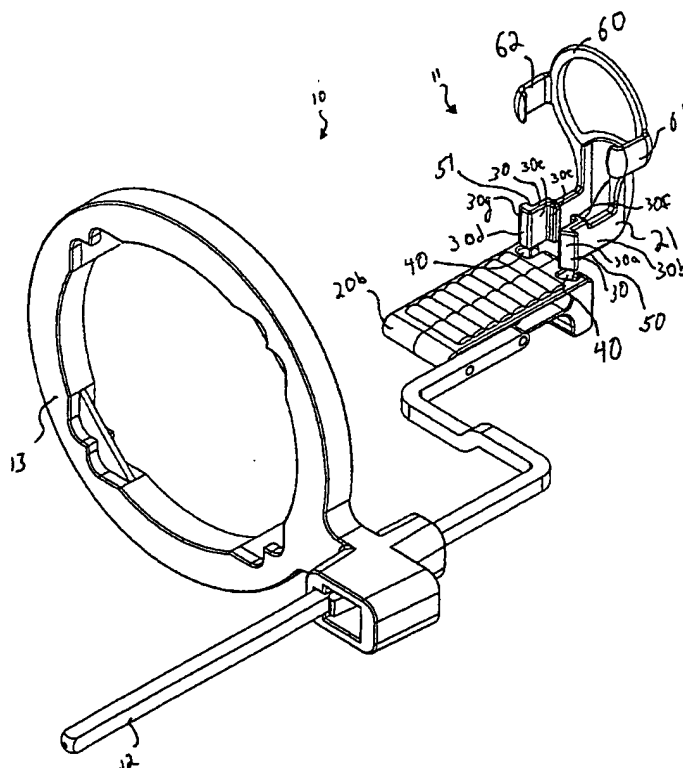
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(54) Title: MODULAR BITE BLOCK AND SENSOR HOLDER APPARATUS FOR DENTAL X-RAY PROCEDURES



(57) Abstract: A dental bite block (20) and sensor holder (21) assembly (11) has a bite block (20) configured (31) to detachably affix to a sensor holder (21). Affixing surfaces (30, 31) are provided between the bite block (20) and the sensor holder (21) such that the sensor holder (21) is removably affixed to the biteblock (20).

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MODULAR BITE BLOCK AND SENSOR HOLDER APPARATUS FOR  
5 DENTAL X-RAY PROCEDURES

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention is a bite block and sensor holder apparatus for  
10 use during dental x-ray procedures. More particularly, the invention is a  
modular bite block and sensor holder assembly, such that a given sensor can  
be used with bite blocks for different x-ray procedures. Also, provided is an  
improved aiming ring for use in dental x-ray procedures.

15 BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Dental radiographs are made using x-ray examination units, often  
including an x-ray cone or tube positioned proximate the patient and aligned to  
take x-rays of certain teeth. Dental x-ray sensors, including films, charge  
20 coupled devices, phosphor imaging plates or the like, often have a generally  
flat or plate-like configuration and standardized dimensions so that the sensor  
can be placed into the oral cavity.

The sensor is placed into the patient's mouth and held in place  
proximate to the tooth or teeth to be examined. The x-ray's are directed  
25 through the target teeth and then through the sensor. It has been found that  
proper orientation of the sensor is required to eliminate distortions and  
improper focus.

To ensure proper orientation of the sensor, sensor carriers with "bite  
blocks" have been developed. These devices often have a plate for holding the  
30 sensor and another plate that the patient bites down upon to position the device  
and the carried sensor. A bite block is shown for example, in U.S. Pat. No.  
3,473,026.

Different sensors are often used depending upon the area of the mouth to be examined. This may include for example, endo, posterior, anterior, left, right, upper and lower bite wings, and the like. Known bite blocks and sensor holders have been individually designed and manufactured for each different type of sensor. The dimensions of the sensor and the holder dictate the degree of secured positioning of the sensor in the holder.

A dental professional may have a large number of x-ray sensors with varying sizes and shapes, and hence, a similarly large number of sensor holders. The dental professional is often faced with employing a different sensor or set of sensors, holders and bite blocks depending upon the particular x-ray procedure being employed. At best, it is time consuming to change between sensors, sensor holders and bite blocks.

A need exists therefore, for a sensor holder/bite block assembly or apparatus, which will accommodate different sizes and shapes of x-ray sensors. It has also been found that a need exists for an aiming ring that will accommodate more than one size or shape of dental x-ray collimator.

#### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is an object of the invention to provide a dental x-ray bite block.

It is another object of the invention to provide a bite block having an x-ray sensor holder.

It is a further object of the invention to provide a bite block and sensor holder assembly, which can be employed to hold a variety of sensors of different shapes or sizes.

It is yet another object of the invention to provide such a modular bite block which will detachably connect to a sensor holder.

These and other objects of the present invention, as well as the advantages thereof over existing art forms, which will become apparent in view of the following specification are accomplished by means hereinafter described and claimed.

In general, a dental bite block and sensor holder assembly comprises a bite block configured to detachably affix to a sensor holder. Affixing means are provided between the bite block and the sensor holder such that the sensor holder is removably affixed to the bite block.

5 Preferred forms of the subject dental bite block and sensor holder assembly are shown by way of example in the accompanying drawings, and are deemed sufficient to effect a full disclosure of the invention. The exemplary assembly is described in detail without attempting to show all of the various forms and modifications in which the invention might be  
10 embodied; the invention being measured by the appended claims and not by the details of the specification.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a perspective, exploded view of a bite block and sensor holder  
15 assembly, embodying the concepts of the present invention;

Fig. 2 is a perspective, exploded view of an alternative embodiment of a bite block and sensor holder assembly, also embodying the concepts of the present invention;

Fig. 3 is a perspective, exploded view of another alternative  
20 embodiment of a bite block and sensor holder assembly, also embodying the concepts of the present invention;

Fig. 4 is an alternative embodiment of the sensor holder portion of the invention as depicted in Fig. 1;

Fig. 5 is an alternative embodiment of an aiming ring and bite block  
25 assembly according to the invention; and

Fig. 6 is an alternative embodiment of an aiming ring and bite block assembly according to the invention.

#### PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

30 An x-ray sensor-positioning device according to the invention is generally designated by the number 10 on the attached drawings. Assembly

10 is preferably configured to have a conventional dental x-ray guide arm 12. An exemplary guide arm and its use with a bite block for taking a dental x-ray is shown in U.S. Pat. No. 3,473,026, which is incorporated by reference for its disclosure of a guide arm and bite block. As shown in Figs. 1-3, guide arm 12  
5 may be configured to be affixable to an x-ray tube collimator-positioning ring 13 in a conventional manner. Such a ring is also shown for example, in U.S. Pat. No. 3,473,026, and, US Des. 237,016 which are incorporated by reference for disclosure of such a ring.

Aiming ring 13a, Fig. 5, shows a plurality of regularly spaced, opposing steps 13b for receiving and registering a collimator (not shown). One set of such steps is known in the art (see for example, US Des. 237,016). The present invention employs two sets of steps 13b in order to allow registration of more than one size of collimator. Although it is preferred to “concentrically” arrange one set of steps 13b within another, sets of steps 13b  
15 can be offset if desired. Grooves 14 can be provided in the exterior diameter of aiming ring 13a, such that an x-ray tubehead (not shown) can be aligned to wholly encompass whatever x-ray sensor is held by positioning device 10.

A bite block and sensor holder assembly 11 is provided as part of device 10, and includes a bite block 20 and a sensor holder 21 (Fig. 1). Bite  
20 block 20 is generally configured for use in a specific x-ray procedure. For example, bite block 20 in Fig. 1 is of a configuration useful for an endo x-ray. Bite block 20a (Fig. 2) is suited for use in taking a bitewing x-ray, and Fig. 3 shows a bite block 20b useful in taking an anterior or posterior x-ray image. Each bite block 20, 20a and 20b serve the same function, that is providing an  
25 area that is clamped between a patient’s teeth. Given the requirements of a specific x-ray however, different shapes of bite blocks are required. The invention will be exemplified herein with reference to bite block 20 of Fig. 1 for purposes of this discussion (unless otherwise noted), it being understood that the invention is equally useful with bite blocks 20a, 20b or indeed, any  
30 conventional bite block shape or size without limitation.

There is removably attached to bite block 20 the sensor holder 21. It is likely that a dental professional will use one size and shape of sensor, be it x-ray film, CCD or phosphor plate technology for different x-rays (endo, anterior, posterior, bitewing or the like). Before the present invention, it would be standard practice for the dental professional to have a variety of bite block/sensor holders integrally formed together. According to the present invention, the sensor holder 21 and the bite block 20 are not integrally formed but rather detachably affixed. Further, the structure to attach a sensor holder 21 to a bite block 20 (which will be discussed and exemplified below), is the same no matter what the shape of the given bite block 20, 20a or 20b. In this manner, it will be appreciated that a single sensor holder can be used to attach to a different bite block 20, 20a or 20b. This is termed a "modular" design for purposes of this discussion. It will also be appreciated that a bite block may be used with different sizes and shapes of sensor holders. Again, the invention will be exemplified herein with respect to a single sensor holder 21.

To be detachably affixed to a bite block 20, sensor holder 21 must be provided with attachment means that correspond to attachment means carried by the bite block 20. By providing bite block 20 with the same attachment means as bite blocks having other shapes, such as bite blocks 20a and 20b, the same sensor 21 can be detachably affixed to any bite block 20, 20a or 20b, or indeed, any bite block carrying the same attachment means.

Any attachment means between sensor holder 21 and bite block 20 is within the scope of the invention, the only criteria being that the two components be held securely with respect to each other and that they be removable. Again, this aspect is termed being "modular" in design. A preferred attachment means is a complex profile or tab 30 carried by sensor holder 21 and an at least partially corresponding slot 31 carried by bite block 20. It is understood that bite block 20 could easily be configured to carry complex profile 30 and that sensor holder 21 could carry slot 31 and still be within the scope of the invention. The invention will be exemplified with sensor 21 carrying complex profile 30.

By "complex profile" it is meant a plurality of surfaces, such as surfaces 30a-30f (Fig. 1) each at some angle to at least one other. Complex profile tabs 30 and corresponding slots 31 can also be round and still fall within the scope of the definition of "complex profile". Surfaces 30a-f of  
5 complex profile 30 need not necessarily be linear, but may be curvilinear, such as surface 30g, or even round. By "slot" it is meant some surface such as surface 31a configured to receive at least one surface of complex profile 30 such as surface 30c.

Preferably, slot 31 is configured to receive complex profile 30 in such  
10 a manner that a plurality of surfaces 30a-f physically engage or touch slot 31 and at least some other portion of bite block 20. By properly configuring the actual dimensions of these components, sensor 21 can be held securely to bite block 20. The fit between complex profile 30 and slot 31 may also be a friction fit. It will be appreciated that to secure sensor 21 to bite block 20,  
15 complex profile 30 is received within slot 31. To detach or remove sensor 21 from bite block 20, it is merely necessary to slide complex profile 30 from slot 31.

An alternative embodiment of slot 31 is shown by way of example in Fig. 3 as slot 40. Slot 40 is itself also of a "complex profile" substantially  
20 corresponding in shape and dimension to the shape and dimension of complex profile 30.

It is also to be appreciated that complex profile 30 may be configured to have a plurality of arms 50 and 51, each carrying its own complex profile 30. In the embodiment of the invention depicted in the drawings, sensor 21  
25 has two arms 50 and 51, it being understood that any number of arms is within the scope of the invention. It is also to be appreciated that any means of detachably affixing sensor 21 to bite block 20 is within the scope of the invention. This may include, bolts, screws, nuts, locking mechanisms, or the like without limitation, all of which are within the scope of the invention and  
30 the term "modular."

Sensor holder 21 will be configured to receive one or more sensors. For example, in the sensor 21 depicted in Figs. 1-3, a back support 60 and clip arms 61, 62 are employed. A sensor (not shown) can be secured within sensor 21. Because any sensor holder of any configuration is within the scope of the invention, and because such sensor holders are conventional in the art, no specific sensor holder, or bit block, is necessarily a limitation of the present invention.

For example, Fig. 4 depicts an alternative embodiment of a sensor holder 21a. Sensor holder 21a is configured with a back support 60 similar to back support 60 of sensor 21. However, in place of clip arms 61 and 62 of sensor 21, sensor 21a is provided with upper clip arm 70, generally opposing a lower clip arm 71. A conventional sensor (again, not shown) is supported between clip arms 70, 71 and back support 60. Otherwise, sensor 21a is substantially similar in its modular design to sensor 21.

Fig. 6 shows an alternative embodiment of a bitewing block 80. Bitewing 80 is provided with a groove 81 on the bite surface 82 to help the user in positioning a sensor (not shown) held by block 80. Groove 81 helps to register such a sensor. It will also be appreciated that block 80 is of an overall thin design, allowing for greater patient comfort as compared to prior bite blocks.

Based upon the foregoing disclosure, it should now be apparent that the use of the modular bite block and sensor holder assembly described herein will carry out the objects set forth hereinabove. It is, therefore, to be understood that any variations evident fall within the scope of the claimed invention and thus, the selection of specific component elements or parts can be determined without departing from the spirit of the invention herein disclosed and described. Thus, the scope of the invention shall include all modifications and variations that may fall within the scope of the attached claims.



We claim:

1. A dental x-ray positioning device comprising:  
a bite block and sensor holder assembly, and means to  
removably affix said sensor holder to said bite block.
- 5 2. A device as in claim 1, wherein said sensor holder has means to  
removably affix a dental x-ray sensor thereto.
3. A device as in claim 2, wherein said has means to removably  
affix a dental x-ray sensor includes means to affix a dental x-  
ray film.
- 10 4. A device as in claim 2, wherein said has means to removably  
affix a dental x-ray sensor includes means to affix a digital x-  
ray sensor.
5. A device as in claim 1, wherein said means to removably affix  
said sensor holder to said bite block comprises a complex  
15 profile tab carried by said one of said bite block or said sensor  
holder, and an at least partially corresponding slot carried by  
the other of said bite block or said sensor holder.
6. A device as in claim 5, wherein said sensor holder carries two  
of said complex profile tabs, each of which has a different  
20 configuration from the other; and, said bite block carries two  
slots, each of which at least partially corresponds in shape to  
one of said two complex profile tabs carried by said sensor  
holder; such that said slots each can receive one of said  
complex profile tabs, thereby removably affixing said sensor  
25 holder to said bite block.
7. A dental positioning device kit comprising:  
a bite block and at least two sensor holders, each of  
which is separately and removably affixable to said bite, block;  
each of said sensor holders having means to removably  
30 affix a dental x-ray sensor thereto, and each said means to  
removably affix a dental x-ray sensor of each said sensor holder

being of a different configuration from that of the other said sensor holder.

8. A method of assembling a bite block and sensor holder assembly for the taking of a dental x-ray comprising the steps of:

inserting a complex profile tab carried by said sensor holder into a receiving slot carried by said bite block, and either before or after that step positioning a dental x-ray sensor into said sensor holder.

9. A dental x-ray aiming device of the type having an aiming ring, a set of steps on said aiming ring to register a dental x-ray collimator, a bite block and dental x-ray sensor, said aiming ring and said bite block being held in an opposing relation by a support arm, the improvement comprising:

providing said aiming ring with at least two sets of said steps, such that at least two different sizes of collimators may be registered by the same aiming ring.

10. A device as in claim 9, wherein said sets of steps are concentrically arranged.

11. A device as in claim 9, wherein the outer diameter of said aiming ring is provided with aiming grooves.

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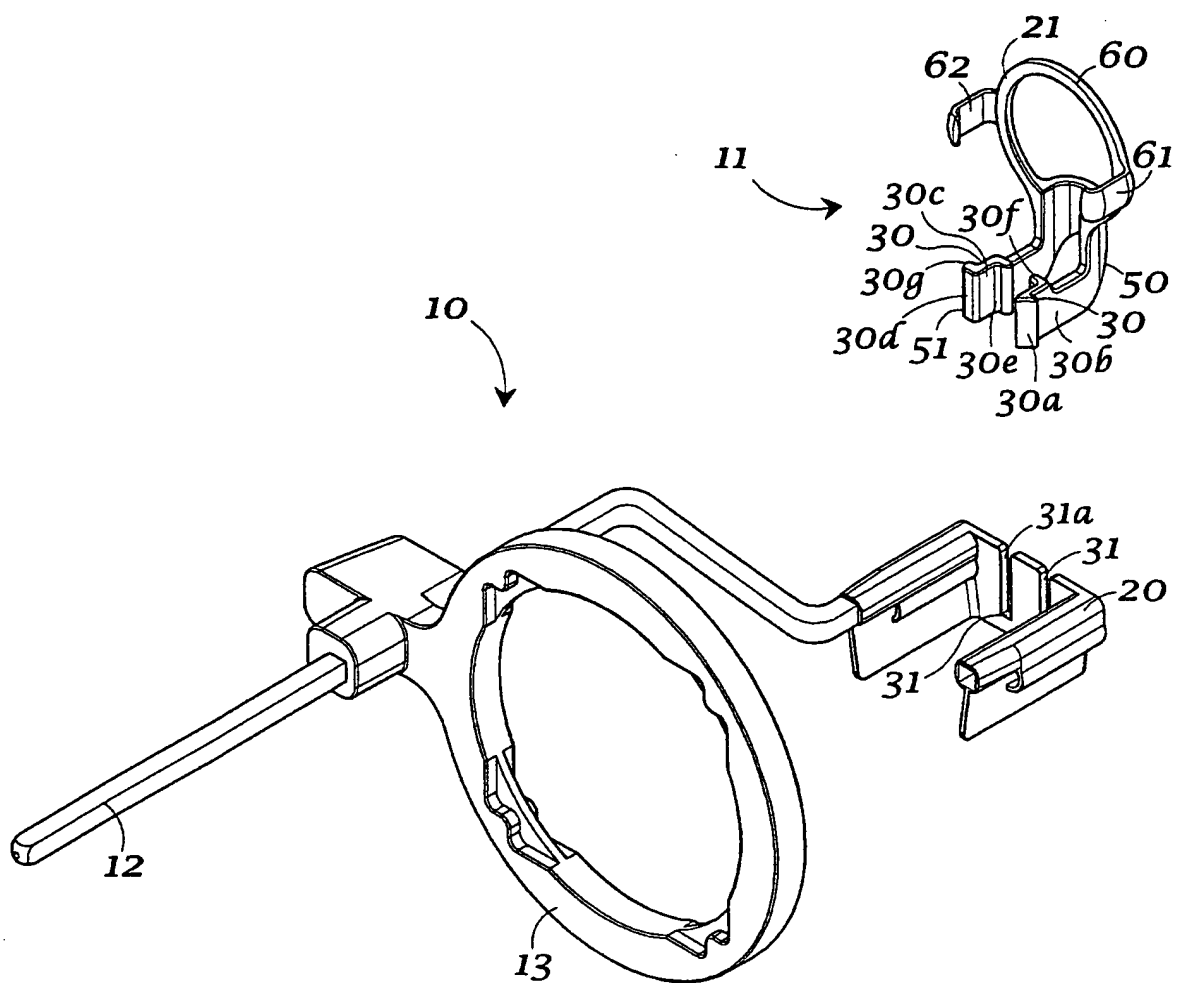


Fig. 1

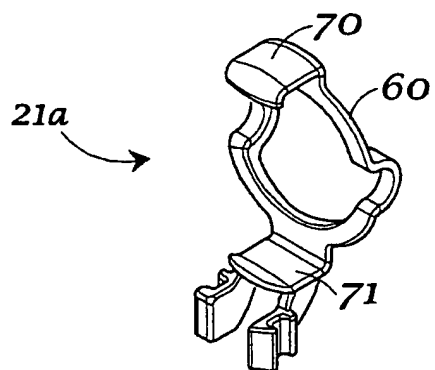


Fig. 4

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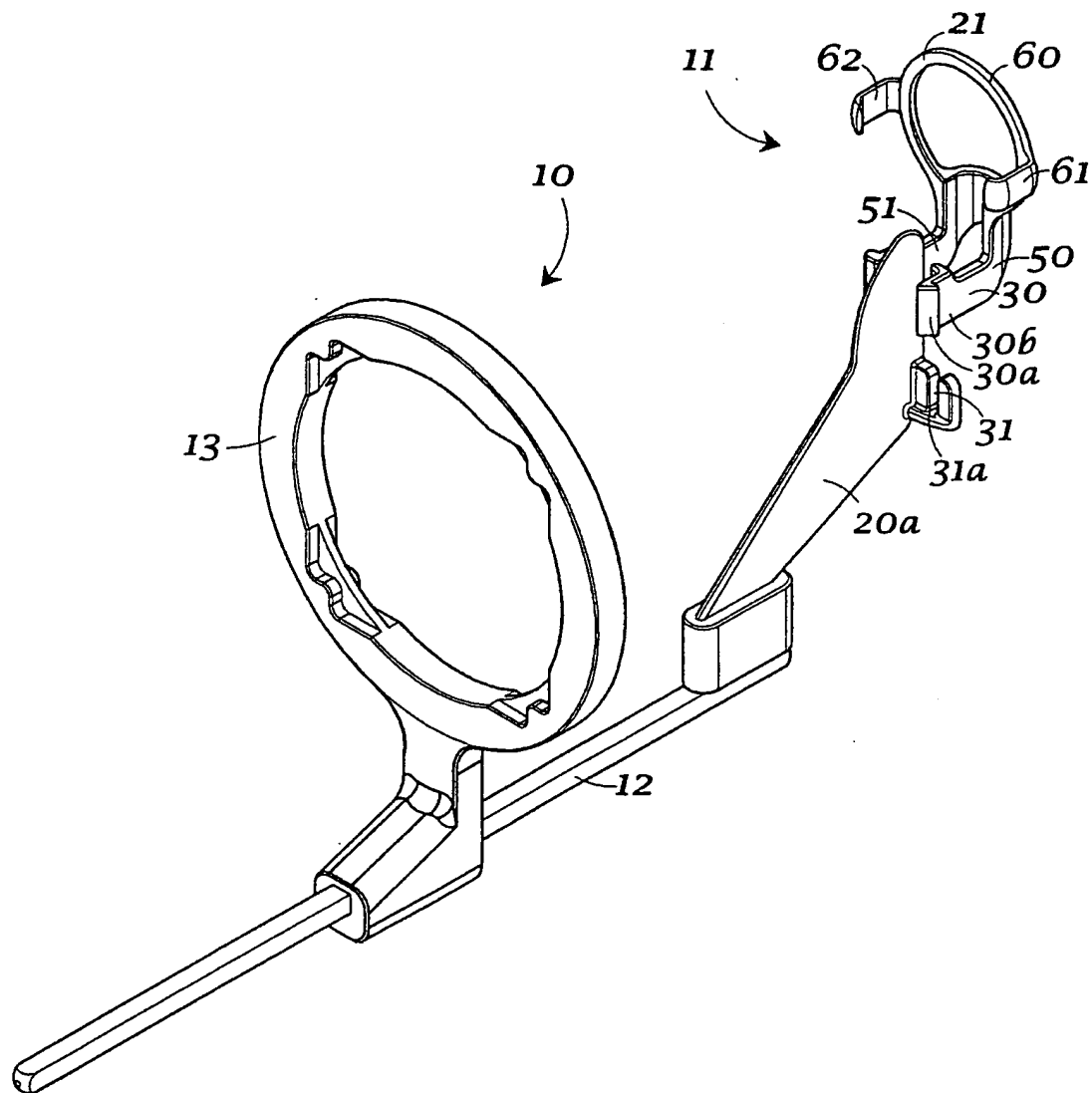


Fig. 2

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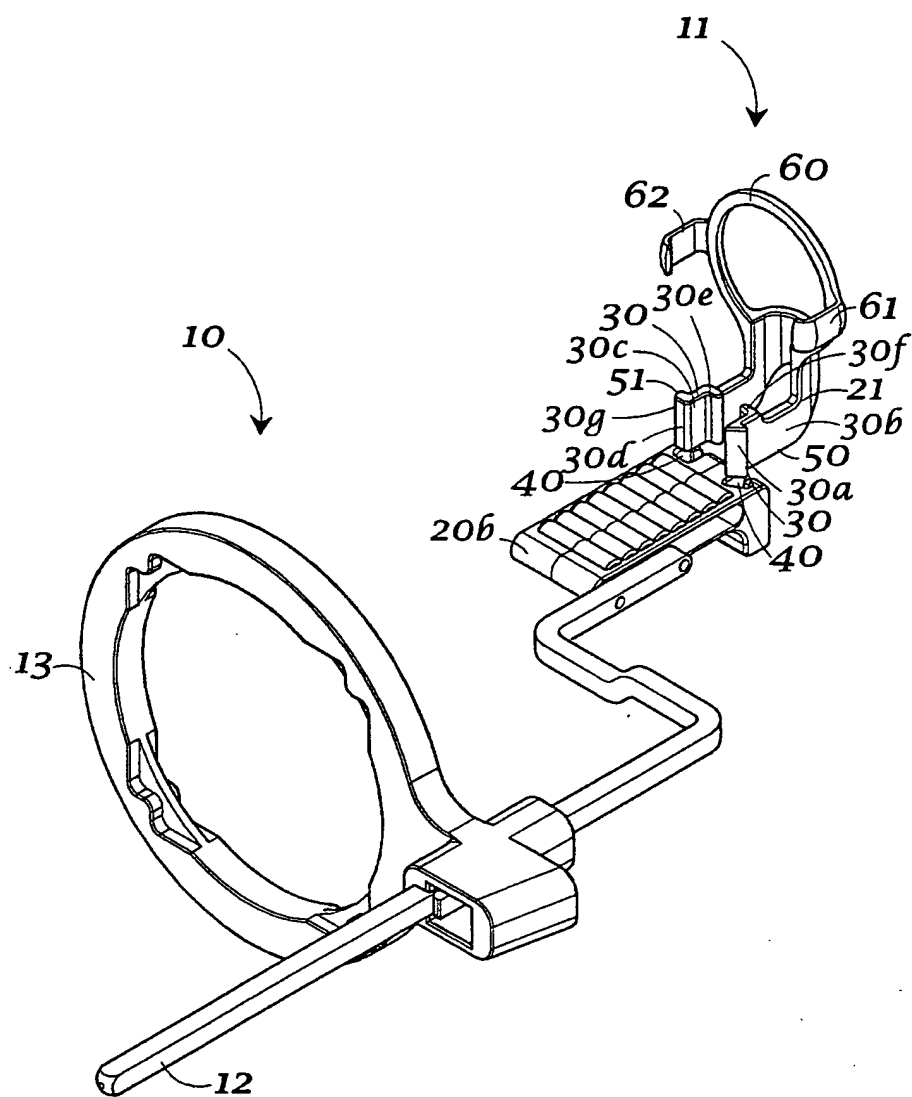
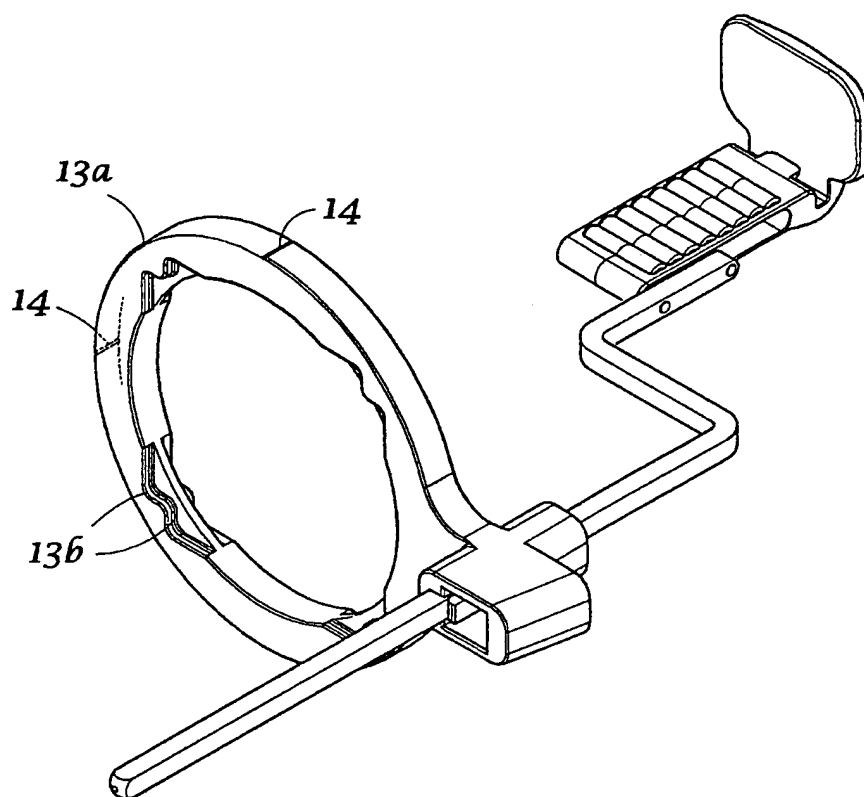


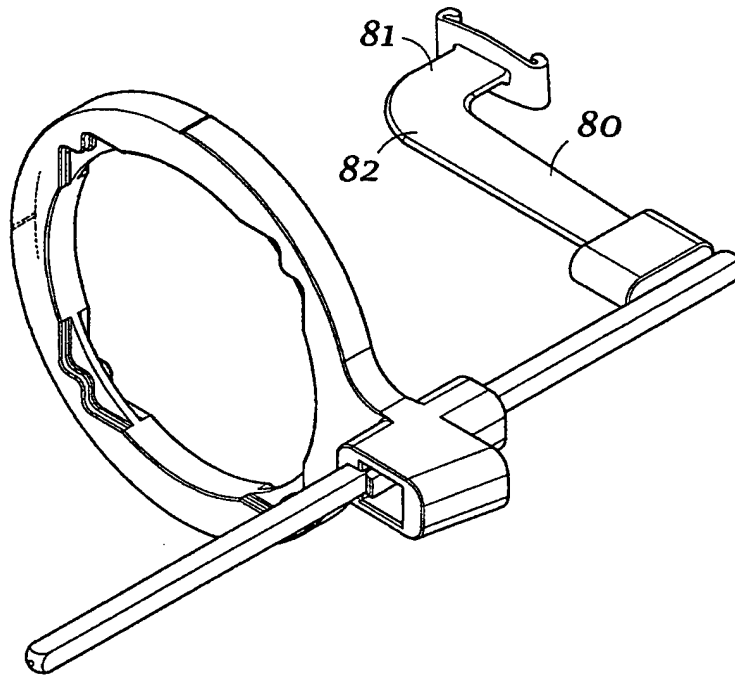
Fig. 3

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*Fig. 5*

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*Fig. 6*